

FLEET FOCUS

USS Cleveland earns gold surface warfare excellence pennant

JOC(SW/FMF) S.A. “Doc” Thornbloom
USS Boxer (LHD 4)

USS Cleveland (LPD 7) distinguished herself by raising, for the first time, the prestigious gold surface warfare excellence pennant on Aug. 7.

Created only a year ago, the gold pennant recognizes those ships whose officers have qualified as unrestricted line surface warfare officers, surface warfare supply corps officers or surface warfare medical /dental corps officers.

Eligibility for the pennant requires all officers who have been onboard for 18 months to be qualified as a surface warfare officer in their respective areas.

Unrestricted line officers (those eligible for command at sea) must fulfill a series of personal qualifications and then pass several oral examination boards including of-

ficer of the deck underway and combat information center watch officer before they face their final test before the Surface Warfare Officer Qualification Board comprised of the ship’s senior officers.

Supply, medical and dental corps officers are equally tested as they strive to fulfill requirements for knowledge outside their area of occupational expertise. They, too, must satisfactorily complete a qualification board comprised of the ship’s senior officers.

Cleveland is returning from a routine six-month deployment to the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf Region. Since deploying on March 14, two unrestricted line officers and one Dental Corps officer have qualified as surface warriors. The pennant, containing a gold surface warfare pin on a blue background, is flown from the ship’s mast just below other pennants signifying awards for meritorious and commendable action.



PH3 Oscar Romero

This aerial photograph was taken of the Cleveland’s SWO officers and ESWs enlisted personnel. “SW” indicates surface warfare and the “7” is the hull number of Cleveland (LPD 7). The image was taken as the ship was enroute to Hawaii, returning from a six-month deployment to the Western Pacific, Indian Ocean and Arabian Gulf.

Amphib Sailors rescue mariners from sinking ship off Guam



PH2 Rose Andrade photo

The captain of the sunken fishing vessel, Ji Moon Chun 21, Kui Ching Huang, says goodbye to his rescuers, Search Air Rescue Team members from USS Boxer (LHD 4). Huang and his eight Chinese and Taiwanese crewmembers were escorted from Boxer by Immigration and Naturalization Service members after Boxer pulled into Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on a port visit before returning to its San Diego homeport. Boxer and the ship’s SAR Team rescued the crew Aug. 26, approximately 640 miles from Guam in the Northern Pacific.

U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

ABOARD USS BOXER, Western Pacific — The San Diego-based amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) rescued eight Taiwanese mariners from their burning ship, motor vessel Ji-Moon Chun 21, in the early morning hours Aug. 25.

Boxer was returning to the U.S. mainland after a six-month deployment to the Western Pacific and Arabian Gulf when the ship received a distress call from the Taiwanese vessel approximately 600 miles east of Guam.

In heavy rain and rough seas, Boxer received word that the ship didn’t have life vests and that some of the vessel’s crew did not know how to swim.

Boxer diverted toward the sinking vessel and sent search and rescue helicopters ahead to assist. When the helicopters arrived, they determined a deck recovery would be too hazardous and deployed a life raft to recover the ship’s crew.

As flooding on the Ji-Moon Chun worsened, the inbound crew of Boxer prepared to launch a rigid-hull inflatable boat to assist in the recovery of the crew.

A search and rescue (SAR) swimmer from an on-scene helicopter departed to assist in the vessel’s evacuation.

Boxer came into view and the evacuation began. The eight crewmembers and the SAR swimmer boarded the life raft and were safely recovered by Boxer approximately three hours after helicopters initially arrived on the scene.

Boxer carries approximately 2,500 Sailors and Marines, leads the three-ship Boxer Amphibious Ready Group and is part of the USS Constellation Battle Group. It is a 40,000-ton multi-purpose amphibious ship that carries a mix of helicopters and landing craft.

Chosin Sailors volunteer skills to humanitarian project in East Timor

Lt. j.g. Mark Aragon,
USS Chosin Public Affairs

Three Sailors from the cruiser USS Chosin (CG 65) used their skills in carpentry and masonry to assist in a United States Support Group East Timor’s (USGET) humanitarian and civic action project at the Ryder-Cheshire Foundation.

The foundation was originally a halfway house for tuberculosis patients and a home for the elderly. Currently, in addition to tuberculosis patients, most of the residents

are those who require repeat treatments and physical therapy that cannot be accommodated in Dili Hospital due to the lack of facilities. The staff is composed of 10 East Timorese and five Australian volunteers.

Lt. Deke Egger, Chief Operations Specialist (SW) Kurt Cutkelvin and Operation Specialist Seaman Adam Stacey, along with Australian volunteers from the Force Logistics Squadron and the U.S. Seabees from Naval Mobile Construction Battalion 5 from Fort Hueneme, Calif., constructed a concrete kitchen extension with

an awning where residents wash dishes and do their laundry.

“This is such a wonderful gift to the residents because prior to the concrete floor, they did their dishes and laundry on the dirt which eventually turned to mud”, remarked Anna, an Australian staff volunteer.

In addition to the extension, the international crew of volunteers used the excess cement to construct concrete platforms for the water tank and water pump, as well as build an access ramp to the recreation room

in order to provide easy access for residents in wheelchairs. The three Chosin volunteers will work on the project for the duration of the port visit.

The USS Chosin is commanded by Capt. Peter Daspit and is homeported at Pearl Harbor. The ship’s most recent employment was in support of Operation Southern Watch and enforcing U.N. sanctions in the Arabian Gulf.

USS Chosin will remain in Dili for three days before continuing to other missions in the Pacific.

Skinny Dragons stress safety by holding mishap drill, safety stand down

Lt. Richard Pool
VP-4 Public Affairs Officer and
VP-4’s Safety/NATOPS Department

The morning of Aug. 21 started out like any other for VP-4 combat aircrew (CAC10) onboard MCAF Kaneohe Bay.

The crew was on the flight schedule to conduct a scheduled event when members of the Skinny Dragons’ safety department boarded the aircraft and announced; “This is a drill, this is a drill, you have 10 minutes to ditch.”

The aircrew responded and immediately carried out their assigned duties as outlined by the P-3C aircraft Naval Air Training and Operating Procedures Standardization or “NATOPS.”

All P-3C aircrew members received extensive training in NATOPS emergency procedures, including ditch, bailout, in-flight fire, mechanical malfunctions and numerous others.

Accordingly, the aircrew expertly performed the drill under the supervision of the NATOPS instructors.

After discussing emergency destruction, securing any loose gear in the aircraft and jettisoning weapons, the crew strapped in and prepared for water impact. NATOPS instructor, Lt. Mikel Smith, informed the crew the aircraft had simulated water impact and all motion had stopped.

Crewmembers evacuated the aircraft via the emergency over the wing exits.

After a successful emergency evacuation, the crew was transported to the MCBH pool where the VP-4 flight surgeon, corpsmen, Safety/NATOPS instructors and MCBH rescue swimmers were waiting.

The aircrew deployed a 12-man life raft, entered the water, inflated their life vests both automatically and manually, performed flight equipment treading water/drownproofing and boarded the raft.

Crewmembers were then tested on all available emergency equipment both in their survival vest and raft.

Simultaneously in the VP-4 duty office, Squadron Duty Officer (SDO), Lt. Bryce Lehna, and assistant SDO, Petty Officer Damien Garcia, were notified by

the squadron’s aviation safety officer, Lt. Luke Hofacker, and ground safety officer, Lt. j.g. Dave “Rickdawg” Ricketson, of the simulated mishap.

The SDO immediately initiated the squadron aircraft mishap plan. Lt. Hofacker and Lt. j.g. Ricketson facilitated and monitored the duty office’s execution of the mishap plan.

Meanwhile in maintenance control, Chief Neal Witherspoon directed the efforts of the maintenance department as well as mustered the squadron’s emergency reclamation team and all required materials.

The drill was thoroughly briefed to the entire squadron during the Skinny Dragon safety stand down held Aug. 24. Lt. Hofacker provided the command

with an overview of the entire event and Lt. Lehna spoke about lessons learned from the duty officer perspective. The brief included a video presentation of the entire drill.

Skinny Dragon Safety/NATOPS Officer, Lt. Cmdr. Paul Bennett, commented, “The mishap drill provided outstanding training for our aircrews, duty office personnel and maintenance department.

“This drill pointed out areas where we can and will improve our mishap plan and aircrew training.

“Briefing the results of the drill during our squadron safety stand down reinforced the importance of all personnel being prepared in the unfortunate event of an aircraft mishap.”